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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of input as one of the universals in second language acquisition theory. Considerations include how language instructors can best organize and present input and when certain kinds of input are more important. A self-administered program evaluation exercise using relevant theoretical and methodological contributions from different sources is presented to be answered by attending teachers for later use in group work. The following tenets for the organization and teaching of any second language program are: (1) Input has to be comprehensible; the level of language development of the learner will guide the specifics of way and timing of input; (2) Input has to motivate the student; and (3) Input has to be copious. The Central Middle Magnet School (CMMS) (Kansas City, Missouri) Intensive Input Adventure originated in the 1980s in the desegregation mandate of Kansas City as a late immersion experience for 300 students. The CMMS Foreign Language program was organized as a high-input language experience with different levels of intensity with the goal of increasing language proficiency. Strands present in the life of the CMMS program include late immersion (full), continuation immersion (full and partial), language only, and exploratory language. A curriculum plan is given. Planning activity worksheets are attached. (Contains four references.) (CK)

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INTENSIVE INPUT IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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PART ONE : THEORETICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. INPUT : A LEGACY OF SORTS

WELCOME to the Intensive Input Language Acquisition workshop!

Input can be considered one of the universals in second language acquisition theory. None of us would probably dare deny its all-important role in language acquisition. Yet, we seem to be far from having a common understanding of it and, especially, of its implications for instruction. We are confronted with hesitation and doubt when trying to bring this principle to the classroom or to the individual acquisition levels. Furthermore, even though we may concur in principle with the input theory and with the way in which it may work in acquiring a language, we are oftentimes bewildered by the question of "how". That is, in which way to use our input as language instructors, how to best organize and present it, when certain kinds of input are more important --and other like questions.

We would like to start our workshop with a self-administered program evaluation exercise. For this exercise, we have used recent relevant theoretical and methodological contributions from different sources. You will be able to use your answers --or a modification of them-- during your participation in later group work. Again, you may modify your answers at a later point in the workshop, should you consider it necessary. Also, you will be the only user of these instruments.

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Worksheet No. 1 : MY PROGRAM

Worksheet No. 2 : AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

Worksheet No. 3 : MORE AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

Worksheet No. 4 : REACTIONS AND IDEAS

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We would now like to present a few comments on the role of input in second language acquisition that, in one way or another, we have used in our own program. Following these preliminary notes, we will present our experience with an intensive-input program at the middle school level, and we will then have an opportunity for hands-on work in the planning of specific language-intensive second language acquisition experiences.

According to Krashen, the Input Hypothesis (IH) --a subset of the Monitor Model-- assumes that we acquire language by understanding messages, and it works much in the way of "incidental learning" or, after Chomsky, "tacit knowledge". Krashen also admits that more than one interpretation is possible for IH. Furthermore, to Krashen, "if IH is correct, it predicts, first, that more comprehensible input, aural and written, results in more language acquisition", and that "acquisition can occur without learning..." i.e. "without instruction (defined ... as a program based on skill-building)". Finally, Krashen also mentions a specific kind of language input, i.e. "sheltered subject matter teaching..." "where substantial amounts of language acquisition can take place when students learn subject matter through another language" --in our interpretation referring to what has also been called "immersion language education", or, simply, "immersion". (1: 440-443).

Ellis believes that "input comprises (1) the inherent properties of a target language system, and (2) the formally and interactionally adjusted features found in foreign and teacher talk... thus the relationship between input and learner is an interactive one." (2: 276).

In a recent article, Stanley Whitley (3: 137-154) conducted a thoughtful critical review of "Communicative Language Teaching" and called it in his article "An Incomplete Revolution". In his "points of agreement" among the different main approaches to communicative language teaching considered, Whitley mentions the following:

1) Language is for communication, a negotiation of meaning over an information gap that necessitates the transaction (Krashen, and others)

2) Communicative competence... is a creative ability, not just habits (*in* :Savignon, 82), and it develops through real communication (Savignon, and others).

3) Communicative competence is much broader that Chomskyan "grammatical" competence Canale and Swain).

4) Communicative competence...(much, or most of it) must be acquired, i.e. figured out from input through experience with the language (Krashen).

5) ...classwork must move beyond drills to activities that re-create normal uses of language: group-pair work, simulations, problem-solving, surveys, etc. Tasks should focus on content, with options for self-expression (*in* : Brumfit, 16). There is strong use of visual supports, recordings, motor activities, and other ways of engaging sensation and feeling (*in* : Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 28; Krashen and Terrell, 55 , p. 55). By activating schemata (*in* : Byrnes, 18; Omaggio, 77, p. 102) and binding meaning to form (*in* :Terrell, 98) these aids promote comprehension and thus acquisition.

6) ...The teacher should decrease anxiety, promote confidence and satisfaction with the language, and engage students' feelings and cognitive ability (Allen, and others).

7). Vocabulary growth is vital from the start (Diller, and others).

8) Courses are best organized around situations and functions (Krashen and Terrell).

9) All four skills are important, although listening and speaking are critical (Hammerly, and others).

10) ...Adults can acquire a second language, and in some ways *better* than children (*in* : Diller, 27; Hammerly, 41).

Further agreements "on essentials" (Whitley, 3: 137-154) refer to the following:

1) Two kinds of linguistic knowledge: Learned vs. acquired, according to Krashen, or "conscious vs. unconscious", according to Rivers (*in* :Rivers, 81).

2) Direct error correction can curtail L2 performance (Rivers, and others).

3) The more input, the better (Byrnes, and others).

4) "Explicit Grammar Instruction" may have value for older students, but talking about grammar in L2 is not communicatively normal, nor is it suitable for novices (Terrell, and others).

5) Sequence of acquisitions is not determined by order of exposure (Dulay, and others).

Schulz (4:24-25) suggests that "curriculum planning and teaching activities be guided by three basic questions:

1) How can we supply students with the optimum amount of interesting, comprehensible input?

2) What can we do to provide students with opportunities to interact in the language in real communicative contexts and with real communicative purposes?

3) What can we do to increase student motivation so that they are willing to seek additional input and interactive opportunities...?"

All in all, what seems to pose the most difficulty to planners , administrators, and teachers and instructors of second languages alike may not be so much the what, **but the how**. **METHODOLOGY** is oftentimes elusive. We know where we would like to be. We even know what we want to do to get there. But, we hesitate when it comes to a guiding approach to methodology. To be sure, this point refers to the teaching of a second language per se, and also to the teaching of a second language through content in programs such as immersion education.

In the controversy on how to handle input, the most critical point refers to **meaning**. We agree that meaning is the key to language acquisition. Yet, the meaning of meaning, or, more exactly, the question of how to convey that meaning, is what needs to be addressed. By way of example, the conveyance of meaning can pose difficulties that may prove unsurmountable by the use of some approaches (see exhibit 1).

Three **positions** seem to have championed the field of meaning.

GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION

The grammar-translation approach provides for input --whether meaningful, or not, according to the preceding comments, is to be further examined-- following extensive explanation of grammar and often through paired memorization of L1-L2 words. Perhaps a typical example is given by the Dicho y Hecho, Beginning Spanish textbook by Dawson and Dawson; John Wiley, 1989 (see exhibit 2). Input is usually followed by: a) grammar exercises, b) reading, c) dialogue and conversation. Input is a part of this approach, but it is subordinate to speaking, reading, and writing. Meaning is provided through English. One problem is that words do not follow a linear sequence, as demonstrated in the accompanying exhibits (see exhibits 3 and 4).

INPUT APPROACH OF KRASHEN

This approach assumes that grammar is to be used as an editor to modify material acquired through contact with the language. In reality, this position differs from the grammar-translation approach only it its attitude towards grammar, as can be seen in the slide (see exhibit 5) from the book Kontakte, by Tracy d. Terrell, Erwin Tschirner, Brigitte Nikolai, and Herbert Genzmer (McGraw-Hill, 1992). The grammar is presented in a similar way as in most grammar-translation textbooks, and meaning is taught through translation. In the authors' favor, though, we must point out that the emphasis is more on communication and less on acquiring grammar.

INPUT APPROACH OF WINITZ, REEDS, POSTOVSKY, NORD, AND ASHER

In this input approach, no grammar is taught and meaning is provided directly in the second language. Asher's approach stresses physical activities in general whereas the others advocate the use of pictures. As this system has developed, Winitz and his colleagues have used specific techniques to teach abstract words and collocations, by way of lexical fields, paraphrase, and miniature stories. An example of a technique used by this approach can be seen in exhibit 6. Experimental studies have been conducted to compare results of the effectiveness of this particular approach.

Other input models use combinations of the above referenced approaches.

We believe that the preceding comments, whereas not necessarily comprehensive, offer us a point of view that can illuminate our work in providing intensive input to our students for enhanced language acquisition. These comments seem to lead to the following tenets for the organization and the teaching of any second language program.

(1) Input has to be comprehensible. Such variables as way and timing of the input play a significant role. In this light, the level of language development of the learner will guide the specifics of way and timing.

(2) Input has to be able to motivate the student. To accomplish, input has to appeal to what is close and meaningful to him.

(3) All other things being equal, input has to be as copious as possible. Such considerations as frequency and amount are of special importance.

Within the perspective of these three tenets, specific methodological practices acquire a more understandable dimension. The tenets can serve as guiding principles and, as Schulz points out, as questions to be always asked in devising second language acquisition programs or in teaching in them. These three tenets --slightly modified to accommodate the comments cited in this workshop-- guided the organization and the implementation of the Central Middle Magnet School Foreign Language Program.

B. THE CMMS INTENSIVE INPUT ADVENTURE

Originated in the desegregation mandate of the middle eighties for the Kansas City, Missouri School District, the middle school immersion program started as a 300-student Late Immersion experience. Additional components to serve the different needs of the students were also implemented.

Currently, the Late Immersion strand continues to exist in the eighth grade only, as students with sufficient time in the FL program are now in the seventh grade. It continued to be a Late Immersion program until the students from the language elementary schools who had been in the program for several years reached the middle school level.

The CMMS FL program was organized as a high-input language experience with different levels of intensity depending on the strand. Its goals were established in accord with the general direction of the proficiency movement. Its teaching philosophy included the principles of the Comprehension Approach and, in particular, the three tenets already presented.

The following **strands** have been present at one or the other point in the life of the CMMS program:

* Late Immersion: Full
* Continuation Immersion : Full and Partial
* Language Only
* Exploratory Language

The CMMS FL **curriculum** comprises the following areas:

1. Formal
    a. Immersion disciplines
        1- Math
        2- Science
        3- Social Studies
    b. Target language
    c. Non-immersion subjects
        1- PE/Exploratories
        2- Reading and Literature
        3- English Language Arts

2. Informal
    a. In-school
        1- Infusion
        2- Atmosphere
        3- Special events
            a- FL Week
            b- FL "Olympics"
            c- FL Contests
    b. Out-of-school
        1- Field trips
            a- Day
            b- Overnight
        2- Exchange City
        3- Visits to other schools
        4- Special activities: Cultural fairs, presentations, etc.

PART TWO : "SHOW AND TELL" GROUP WORK

A. Reviewing and Planning Activity

1. The general group breaks into sub-groups of similar interest. A group facilitator and a narrator are appointed.

2. Each group reviews the participants' answers to worksheets 1 through 4. A group summary is established, prepared by the narrator, for each worksheet.

3. Each group selects one type of program and reviews a program already in existence, or plans a new one in accordance with the three input tenets, and the criteria suggested in worksheets 2, 3, and 4.

Special attention must be devoted to the level of language acquisition of the target population. General criteria for input according to level are also included in the group's work packet.

B. Discussion Activity

1. Each group presents a report on the different aspects of the Intensive Input program that responds to the preferences of the members of the group.

2. General group discussion follows.

REFERENCES

1. Krashen, Stephen. "We Acquire Vocabulary and Spelling by Reading: Additional Evidence for the Input Hypothesis". *The Modern Language Journal* 73, iv (1989): 440-464.

2. Ellis, Rod. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: University Press, 1986.

3. Whitley, M. Stanley. "Communicative Language Teaching: An Incomplete Revolution". *Foreign Language Annals I,* 26, No.2 (1993): 138-154.

4. Schulz, Renate. "Second Language Acquisition Theories and Teaching Practice: How Do they Fit? *The Modern Language Journal* 75 i (1991):17-26.

APPENDIX

A. CMMS and the KCMOSD FL Program - The Central Middle Magnet Foreign Language Program is not an isolated entity. It is part of the K-12 Kansas City, Missouri School District Foreign Language and International Studies program. As such, on the one hand it participates of the general direction of the overall program; on the other, it plays a pivotal role in the continuation of the elementary and in the preparation of the high school levels.

B. Has the CMMS program been effective? No hard data are currently available for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the CMMS FL program in terms of language acquisition. Soft data, as compiled through various indicators --teacher assessment, informal use of the language, etc.-- seems to demonstrate excellent effectiveness of the program, especially when considered in the light of other circumstances such as organizational constraints and the difficulties of a late immersion experience. As an example, a German teacher who was in the program since its inception, made the following comment upon leaving: "Gee! I never thought we could make a late immersion experience work..."

When considering effectiveness of the K-6 program, some preliminary data seem to suggest very high effectiveness. It also suggests a very high correlation between time of exposure and language acquisition --as has been documented in several other studies (see exhibit 7).

C. The methodological example of the Winitz group input approach was taken from the book Basic Structures for Spanish, level 2. Other publications that use the same general approach include the Learnables 1- 4 series and various other books based on lexical fields. These publications have been extensively used by at least one of the presenters and by several teachers of the CMMS FL program.

Worksheet No. 1 : MY PROGRAM

Instructions: This sheet will allow you to participate in some planning and evaluation activities with other workshop participants who have similar programs and/or interests. Check what applies to your current or intended program

Program location_____

a. Type of program
_____1- Immersion
_____ a- Late
_____ 1) Total
_____ 2) Partial
_____ b- Continuation
_____ 1) Total (full)
_____ 2) Partial
_____2- FLES
_____3- FLEX
_____4- Exploratory
_____5- Secondary
_____6- College
_____7- Individually-paced
_____ 8- Other:

b. Schedule
_____1- Regular H.S. type
_____2- Blocked-out
_____3- Self-contained
_____ 4- Other

c. Staff (describe):
1-Type_____
_____

2- Recruitment_____
_____

Program description: _____
_____
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Worksheet No. 2 : AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

Instructions: Characterize your program by responding *yes* or *no* to the following statements.

In my program:

_____ 1) Language is for communication, a negotiation of meaning over an information gap that necessitates the transaction.

_____ 2) Communicative competence is a creative ability, not just habits , and it develops through real communication.

_____ 3) Communicative competence is much broader than grammatical competence.

_____ 4) Communicative competence is acquired, i.e. figured out from input through experience with the language.

_____ 5) Classwork moves beyond drills to activities that re-create normal uses of language, group-pair work, simulations, problem-solving, surveys, etc. Tasks focus on content, with options for self-expression. There is strong use of visual supports, recordings, motor activities, and other ways of engaging sensation and feeling . By activating schemata and binding meaning to form, these aids promote comprehension and thus acquisition.

_____ 6) The teacher decreases anxiety, promotes confidence and satisfaction with the language, and engages students' feelings and cognitive ability .

_____ 7). Vocabulary growth is vital from the start.

_____ 8) Courses are organized around situations and functions.

_____ 9) All four skills are important, although listening and speaking are critical.

Comments: _____

Worksheet No. 3 : MORE AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

Instructions: Write *yes* or *no* and make the necessary comments.

In my program, the following are/are not important:

_____1. A clear distinction between two kinds of linguistic knowledge: "Learned vs. acquired" (according to Krashen) or "conscious vs. unconscious" (according to Rivers).

Comments: _____

_____ 2. Avoidance of direct error correction, as it curtails L2 performance.

Comments: _____

_____ 3. A belief in providing as much input as possible, since that the more input, the better.

Comments: _____

_____ 4. Explicit grammar instruction is emphasized at intermediate to advanced levels, but not for novices.

Comments: _____

_____ 5. Sequence of acquisitions is not determined by order of exposure.

Comments: _____

Worksheet No. 4 : REACTIONS AND IDEAS

Instructions: Write your reactions to the following questions, and indicate **how** you think you can apply their implied principles in your program.

1) How can we supply students with the optimum amount of interesting, comprehensible input?

2) What can we do to provide students with opportunities to interact in the language in real communicative contexts and with real communicative purposes?

3) What can we do to increase student motivation so that they are willing to seek additional input and interactive opportunities...?

PLANNING ACTIVITY

PART A : PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

A. PROGRAM TYPE

1. Immersion
    a. Late Immersion
        1- Total
        2- Partial
    b. Continuation Immersion
        1- Total
        2- Partial
2. FLES
3. FLEX
4. Exploratory
5. Secondary
6. College
7. Individually-paced

B. SCHEDULE
1. Regular H.S. type
2. Block
3. Self-contained

C. PERSONNEL RESOURCES
1. Staff
2. Other

PART B : CURRICULAR CHARACTERISTICS

A. FORMAL CURRICULUM

1. Immersion subjects
2. Target language instruction
3. Non-immersion subjects

B. INFORMAL CURRICULUM
1. Infusion
2. School atmosphere
3. In-school activities
    a. During regular teaching day
    b. After school
4. Out-of-school activities

Worksheet No. 2 : AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

Instructions: Characterize your program by responding *yes* or *no* to the following statements.

In my program:

_____1) Language is for communication. a negotiation of meaning over an information gap that necessitates the transaction.

_____ 2) Communicative competence is a creative ability, not just habits , and it develops through real communication.

_____ 3) Communicative competence is much broader than grammatical competence.

_____ 4) Communicative competence is acquired, i.e. figured out from input through experience with the language.

_____ 5) Classwork moves beyond drills to activities that re-create normal uses of language: group-pair work, simulations, problem-solving, surveys, etc. Tasks focus on content, with options for self-expression. There is strong use of visual supports, recordings, motor activities, and other ways of engaging sensation and feeling . By activating schemata and binding meaning to form, these aids promote comprehension and thus acquisition.

_____ 6) The teacher decreases anxiety, promotes confidence and satisfaction with the language, and engages students' feelings and cognitive ability .

_____ 7). Vocabulary growth is vital from the start.

_____ 8) Courses are organized around situations and functions.

_____ 9) All four skills are important, although listening and speaking are critical.

Comments:_____

Worksheet No. 3 : MORE AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

Instructions: Write *yes* or *no* and make the necessary comments.

In my program, the following are/are not important:

_____1. A clear distinction between two kinds of linguistic knowledge: "Learned vs. acquired" (according to Krashen) or "conscious vs. unconscious" (according to Rivers).

Comments:_____
_____
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_____
_____
_____

_____ 2. Avoidance of direct error correction, as it curtails L2 performance.

Comments:_____
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_____ 3. A belief in providing as much input as possible, since that the more input, the better.

Comments:_____
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_____ 4. Explicit grammar instruction is emphasized at intermediate to advanced levels, but not for novices.

Comments: _____
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_____ 5. Sequence of acquisitions is not determined by order of exposure.

Comments: _____
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Worksheet No. 4 : REACTIONS AND IDEAS

Instructions: Write your reactions to the following questions, and indicate **how** you think you can apply their implied principles in your program.

1) How can we supply students with the optimum amount of interesting, comprehensible input?

2) What can we do to provide students with opportunities to interact in the language in real communicative contexts and with real communicative purposes?

3) What can we do to increase student motivation so that they are willing to seek additional input and interactive opportunities...?

INPUT

(1) Input has to be comprehensible. Such variables as way and timing of the input play a significant role. In this light, the level of language development of the learner will guide the specifics of way and timing.

(2) input has to be able to motivate the student. To accomplish, input has to appeal to what is close and meaningful to him.

(3) All other things being equal, input has to be as copious as possible. Such considerations as frequency and amount are of special importance.

LEVELS IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
SOME GENERAL PARAMETERS

PRINCIPLE OF ACTION FOR ALL LEVELS:
COMPREHENSION PRECEDES PRODUCTION!

BASIC LEVEL

SCOPE
* Acquisition of a 5,000-word vocabulary
* Acquisition of basic grammatical structures, including modals and conditionals

METHODOLOGY
* Focus on listening-comprehension
* Avoidance of formalized grammar
* Reading and speaking gradually introduced, but not forced
* Writing, except for very basic elements, delayed

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

SCOPE
* Vocabulary expansion done through lexical fields, such as:
    + Basic concepts, such as: Quantity, speed, time, size, shape
    + Verbs: Eat, walk, place, etc.
    + Topics: Telephone, transportation, weather, etc.
    + People: Helpful, lonely, happy, etc.
* Conversation skills

METHODOLOGY
* Focus still mostly on listening-comprehension
* Speaking and reading more readily encouraged and engineered
* Writing introduced on a more formal basis
* Formal grammar still delayed

ADVANCED LEVEL

SCOPE
* The language at-large
* Literature

METHODOLOGY
* Intensive use of authentic materials
* Formal grammar studied

(Adapted from a contribution by Harris Winitz -- Unpublished document).